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The Bush Nomination

The nation needs an intelligence agency that is professionally competent, recognizes its limited role within a democratic society governed by law, and has civilian leadership of intellectual integrity and independence.

The Central Intelligence Agency has been shown to have fallen on occasion far below such standards; but, in a world in which several other nations possess the military capacity to inflict grievous damage on the United States, it would be reckless for this country in a spasm of righteousness to downgrade or dispense altogether with its intelligence service.

Senator Frank Church, Idaho Democrat and chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, reminded his colleagues in a thoughtful speech the other day of the constructive services that the C.I.A. has performed in the last quarter-century. During that time, for example, it has provided the nation's leadership with accurate and timely information about the development of every important new Soviet weapons system from the H-bomb to the most recent missiles.

This civilian monitoring of Soviet military developments is essential—and should be of particular concern to liberal critics of the agency—since if the C.I.A. did not exist, this intelligence function would pass wholly under the control of the Defense Department. Unlike the armed forces, the C.I.A. has no inherent institutional tendencies to justify larger military budgets, new weapons systems, or additional overseas bases.

Despite the scandals and mistakes in the agency's past, and there have been plenty, Senator Church believes that "the prospects for starting afresh are good and I have viewed the chances to restore public trust and confidence in the C.I.A. with considerable optimism."

It is against this background that Senator Church raises a warning flag against President Ford's nomination of George Bush as C.I.A. director. A former chairman of the Republican National Committee, twice defeated as a candidate for the Senate, and still an aspirant for the Vice-Presidency next year and for other political

office in the future, Mr. Bush would bring the wrong interests and ambitions to this sensitive and demanding position, even though he might well serve in some other Cabinet-level post.

Senator Church urges his colleagues to insist upon political neutrality and disinterested independence as standards in confirming a nominee to head the C.I.A. These are criteria that the Senate should surely apply in deciding on Mr. Bush's nomination.